AVONDALE MILL PROJECT

Interviewee: Clyde Winfrey

Interviewer: Eddie Akin

December 31, 1980

A: I guess it's been what, a month and a half ago?

W: Me and my wife both have been kind of down under the weather. My wife's a whole lot worse than I've been. She's just about had pneumonia the doctor told her.

A: This weather, we have a daughter who's sick and Gail's sisters both their kids are sick too. I just think being closed up so much.

W: Well, we went up on the mountain. We got a daughter who lives up on Pine Mountain or Straight Mountain or whatever you want to call it about six miles above Springville. We stayed up there with her about ten days and began to take a little cold. The house was really too hot.

A: Yeah, yeah.

W: She heats it by wood stove. It's the best heat in the world but to get the other rooms warm enough to really stay in the main room is too hot.

A: It gets too.

W: Go in there and stay. It felt good on them cold days. Different kind of heat than what this is.

A: Mentioning Springville, we got married eleven years ago the twenty eighth and we honeymooned at a friend's cabin up on a lake right at Springville, a private lake up on the mountain.

W: There's a lot of em up there. Quite a few of them. My son-in-law, he's carried us around. I haven't been able to see em yet, but I know they're there.

A: Yeah. Well, let's get the formalities over and then we can get to talking for awhile.

W: Well, I'll tell you what little I know. I don't know too much. In and around there for seventy three years.

A: So I think you might know a little bit. This is an interview with Mr. Clyde Winfrey at his home on December 31, 1980. The way I like to begin and kind of break the ice is to ask you a few questions, biographical sort of things, so I can get pin point things I want to ask later. First of all, what do you recall or have you been told about where your folks came from before you coming to Avondale?

W: Well nothing more not very much. I understand that my Daddy was a Georgian from Beaumont, Texas. He was in the Civil War and I don't remember too much about it because he died when I was about two years old and I have heard my sister say that he thought Texas was the United States and we do have Winfreys as far as I know either came from Georgia and Texas and she said lot of times that he says far as he's concerned he would have never given up. He's still been fighting.

A: Yeah.

W: That's just what I've heard. Now my sister's thirteen years older than I am and she went to work in the cotton mill down there when she was eight years old.

A: At this one or?

W: Avondale.

A: Avondale.

W: Yeah. I was born in number fourteen.

A: Now your parents, like your father and mother, did they come from out of state or were they already settled in Alabama?

W: I think my Daddy came from Georgia but my Mother she was a Carey and she was as far as I know she was already established and she lived in Alabama all her life.

A: Now was she of any relationship to Velma Carey's husband?

W: Uh, her husband, let me see now, my Mother and his Daddy were brother and sister.

A: OK. That's what I was wondering if there was a connection. So your folks came to Avondale. We'll get back to that later. What year were you born? What's your birth date?

W: 1907, October 28.

A: And you were born?

W: Number fourteen in the mill village.

A: Yeah, you'd already mentioned that. Now you have already mentioned one sister, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

W: There was living two brothers and three sisters living and one sister died when she was about, the way I understand it, about four or five years old before I was born.

A: Now, as I recall reading through the *Avondale Suns* after your father died maybe many years later your mother remarried did she not?

W: Yeah, uh huh.

A: Then had a couple of children by that marriage?

W: No, she didn't have any children.

A: No children.

W: Her first husband was a Brasher which is my half, well I said six brothers and sisters while ago but they're just half. But she married a Brasher and all her children were born by Mr. Brasher and then he died in a barber shop right across over there on Thirty Seventh Street and then she married a Winfrey and I was the only child of that marriage. Now my Daddy had some Barnetts that were anchored in Cullman. I don't know anything about them cause I've never been around them to amount to anything and I think I had a half sister come see me one time when I was about fourteen years old but I didn't know anything about her didn't remember her and I was in the band had to go to band practice but now this girl that was dead. I don't know where she was a Brasher or Winfrey. I just don't know.

A: Then of course you grew up there in the village, how far did you get in school?

W: I finished six week of high school. Woodlawn High School.

A: So ninth or tenth that would have been.

W: I went to work in the mill when I was fourteen.

A: OK. What year would that have been that you started working and you were?

W: Well, let's see I was born in 1907, so in when I was fourteen I went to work down there. Have to count it back. I don't know what year.

A: That would be 1921, I think.

W: That's about right.

A: And then what year did you move on from Avondale?

W: 1941. I can tell you that date March 14, 1941 when I went to work at Ingle Iron Works.

A: Now how many of your relatives, I know it's a fairly long list, but how many of your relatives also worked at one time or another with Avondale?

W: Lord, I don't know. Let's see both of my all three of my sisters worked there. My two brothers worked there. My brother's had three boys, my half brother now when I say brother I mean half.

A: OK, I understand.

W: He had three sons and they all started work at Avondale but later years left like I did and one of my sisters had one girl who worked there. The older sister didn't have any children and I guess that's about it.

A: OK. Now did your Mother ever work in the mill?

W: No, eh, eh.

A: Now somewhere along the line you got married. What year would that have been?

W: I believe. I'll have to ask Nora, 1927. Twenty second 1927.

A: OK. And then ya'll had how many children?

W: Two, a boy and a girl.

A: Oh yes. Of course you are a Baptist?

W: Yeah.

A: As I gather and are you still a member of Packer Memorial?

W: Yeah, still there. Joined when I was nine years old. Sometimes in August, 1960. I don't know exactly the date.

A: Now, we got all that little background stuff. Now, I guess you and Willie Belle are about the same age, aren't you? Willie Belle.

W: Pretty close. Yeah.

A: What do you remember about some of the early childhood things like the nursery? Did they have the nursery back when you started?

W: Yeah. Had the nursery.

A: Can you recall anything about those days? That's getting.

W: Yeah. That's about the main thing I do remember. I remember very vividly that the company used to a long time ago, I guess I was seven years old, I remember this very vividly. They'd go around about six months before Christmas, I mean six weeks, and find out how many in the family and the ages of all the kids and at eleven o'clock on Christmas Eve, they'd go around to every house in the village with a basket of fruit and there'd be a toy in there for every kid in the family. I remember that very distinctly cause I got a horn every Christmas there and I run em crazy about that horn.

A: Yeah.

M: I'd play that horn. But I remember that very vividly and I did go to kindergarten. I don't remember too much about that cause they said I wanted to start kindergarten when I was about four years old and that I just couldn't wait and they'd always tell you Santa Claus and they had enough men on the job to might near get through before twelve o'clock.

A: Yeah.

W: Every house in that village.

A: Yeah. That's quite a job.

W: It was. But later on they did that for a good number of years but later on they got to where in the band hall down there they'd to down there and make up the baskets you know then you'd go down there and get your basket. The baskets were filled to according to how many were in the families. Sometimes some of them would get two baskets. We always just got one.

A: Now, you mentioned getting the horn every Christmas, I guess you pretty much felt destined to be in the band didn't you?

W: Well, I guess I don't remember too much about when I joined the band, but when it was organized I guess I was one of the charter members to get in to go in the band. I was about thirteen, fourteen then I guess.

A: Now did Mr. Jordan start it?

W: Yeah. E. C. Jordan.

A: What do you remember about him?

W: I know he was very, very determined. He was nice, he would treat you nice but he didn't put up with no foolishness and I took private lessons from him on trombone, I don't know, I guess for six or eight months. He's very exacting. I mean he wants everything just be just perfect.

A: You almost got it in a large group.

W: That's true.

A: Now he also directed during that time the Boy's Industrial Band. How in the world did he manage the two positions?

W: Well, that wanted no, he had Pell City too.

A: Really?

W: Yeah. But Boy's Industrial School they practiced in the daytime and Avondale they practiced at night and Pell City practiced at night. I believe he had two meetings a week at Avondale and two meetings at week at Pell City. So that give him plenty of lee way in there and besides he had a good many private students you know he gave private lessons to.

A: Now he also at Avondale I don't know if it started out this way but I know by the thirties that it had happened. He had two bands, a first band and a second band.

W: Yeah, uh huh. He did.

A: Was that based on work schedules or was it based on ability?

W: Well, if you got in first band it was based on ability. Now, the first band that was just more or less teaching. If you made good in the second band, then you'd move up to the first band and you had to be well you didn't have to be perfect but you had to be good.

A: Yeah.

W: To get up to the first band and then a lot of em dropped out you know after they couldn't make it. They'd drop out and he'd get some new ones. That's where he kept most of his first band going you see from step up from the second band.

A: Yeah. Now, were most of the outside performances, parades and things by the first band?

W: Yeah, yeah, always.

A: So in other words the second band was kind of a training ground you had to make the grade to perform for other people.

W: Yeah. And every Fourth of July all of em met in Sylacauga for big band rehearsals and all that. That was a very enjoyable. It'd be three or four hundred band members down there you know from different mills and they all got a kick out of it. They looked forward to it.

A: From reading the *Avondale Sun*, I gather that there was a great deal of community pride there in the village.

W: There was, um, hum.

A: For instance one thing I recall that you were probably in on was the, I think it was 1923-24 the part time school won the city wide tinfoil contest.

W: I remember that but I wasn't part of it. I didn't go to part time school but my wife did but I never did go to part time school.

A: Now your wife was, what was her maiden name?

W: Howard.

A: Nora Howard. Yes, I remember running across her name quite a bit.

W: Now she went but see I finished grammar school and worked and went to Woodlawn six months and they had a night school down there. Mr. Comer believed in people who wanted to help themselves they had a night school that met three nights a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday and they had some mighty dog gone good teachers down there and I went to night school down there for I guess for ten years after I quit going to school.

A: Do you remember who some of the night school teachers were?

W: No, I was trying to think of them the other day, who they were, and I just can't remember to save my life.

A: Yeah. Now I remember later on I think Ed Morris did for a while but that was.

W: Who?

A: Ed Morris, didn't he?

W: Ed Morris, he taught it for a while.

A: But that may have been after you had been.

W: I went back and I was the assistant teacher down there for I guess for about three years. I was trying to, a man who taught it, the best one we had but I can't think of his name he was cordially for him and he left there and I believe went to Alexander City as superintendent and somebody shot him. I can't think of that name to save my life. He was smart. He really knew his business and that's why I learnt we called it minseration then. It's a biology, trigonometry and stuff like that you know that I got. It was almost too deep for us but he said we needed some of it anyway I mean if we were going to go anywhere and I taken a course from International Correspondence School too. In between times you know.

A: Yeah, in fact I just ran across a letter yesterday from Donald Comer. One of the girls in the mill, what was her name, Myrtle Baker, I think, that she had just completed a course in International Correspondence School. He was congratulating her. He seemed to always support any effort for people to better themselves.

W: He did. He was a firm believer in helping people that wanted to help themselves. He was very good at that and way back yonder seven and eight years old, every summer he'd carry a bunch of boys to Coosa River somewhere and go out there and stay with us and some of the most enjoyable times I ever had were on them camping trips with him. He always had an instructor there to teach us and had somebody and he fed us goods. Man, he gave us the best there was in eats and this instructor we had time to get up, time to play, play games and swim, had somebody to do our cooking, wash the dishes. All we did was have a good time.

A: But he'd be down there with just the kids.

W: He'd be down there with us. Yes sir. Get up on the middle of that truck and say let her roll cotton, let her roll. No, it was preacher.

A: Preacher, yeah, I remember seeing a picture. In fact, you may have been in that group.

W: Let her roll preacher.

A: Big old state truck? T model?

W: Yeah. I rode in that a million of times. They'd take us over to village creek everyday go over there and stay out there all day with an instructor. Truck would carry us over there and leaver us. A little milk and cookies and stuff like that you know and late in the evening he'd come back and get us and when they quit that they went to Blount Springs. You'd sign up and go down there and stay a week. I think I don't know where they made a charge on that or not. Sometimes I think they charged you fifty cents for a week. I don't know.

A: Later on they did for Camp Helen. I don't know about Blount Springs.

W: Yeah, they did for Camp Helen. I never did go down to Camp Helen but one time but I went to Blount Springs a lot of times.

A: Now, I was reading in the *Sun* in the twenties which would have been after your childhood, but by that time they were had set up at the Community House, breakfast for the kids before they went to school. Did they have that when you were coming up?

W: No, no.

A: It seems that a lot of the welfare activities, the Community House, the clubs, the band, all this sort of thing got started in the early twenties.

W: I spect it was in the early twenties when they built the Community House. Well they had a laundry down there too you know.

A: Yeah.

W: An ice house. We lived right across the street from the ice house when I married they were still of course they didn't have anything that electric refrigerator, it was all ice and before they put this up it was the ice wagon come out through the village every day you know and fill your refrigerator up full of ice and when they build this ice house there why they furnished everybody with ice and they didn't give it to them. If you were able to pay for it, you paid for it. If you couldn't it was give to you and I don't know of anybody back then who lived down there what wasn't able to pay a nickel for twenty five pound of ice. But, when we got married we moved into what they had a model home. Mr. Comer wanted everybody to upgrade their home.

A: Yeah.

W: And we lived in that model home. Well…

A: Number eighty two?

W: Eighty two.

A: Yeah, I remember what 1927 I guess or '28.

W: Something like that.

A: They ran a special article in the *Sun.* Were ya'll the first people to move into it?

W: Yeah. That's where our two children were born. In 82.

A: Now it was nicely furnished.

W: Oh, it was.

A: I take it you didn't have to pay any extra for that or how did they work it out?

W: Yeah, I had to we had to pay for the furniture but when we moved in it everything was there, stove, coal stove.

A: Yeah.

W: And of course nobody had any gas stoves back in them days and we bought the furniture and paid five dollars and fifty cents a month rent less two dollars and I got paid once a month yeah. Five dollars and fifty cents a month rent and water was furnished, lights certain amount of lights were furnished.

A: Now you had said you were paid once a month, by that time were you working in the cloth room or?

W: Naw, at that time.

A: Because I was thinking most people got paid every two weeks didn't they?

W: Well I was working in the spinning room. I was studying cotton card, spinning and plain weaving then with ICS and I guess about I don't remember what year it was but at one time the time keeper, Mr. Zeb Mangham, he was superintendent. Then they transferred me over to the main office, main office was there then for all the plants and then I stayed in there about two or three years and he told me one day said we want you to go back in the mill because you we wanted you to get a little of this experience here on the book work. We want you to go back, Mr. Gilmore, he was cloth room foreman and they put on a second shift later on but they wanted me to go in there as assistant to him and I worked in there I guess about six about a year I guess and then they wanted me to go up in the spinning room as assistant superintendent and I didn't like that. I played with that I guess about five months and I told them I would like to go back to the cloth room and they put me back. I stayed there until Mr. Gilmore left and I taken overseer job they call them now and I tell you that's hard on you. I left there first of March, I left company, in 1941, March 14 I went to work with Ingle Iron Works.

A: Yeah. Now back when you were fourteen, what was the job you started out on?

W: We was my brother he was assistant foreman in the spinning room and they had a bunch of old quills down there that came in from somewhere that had thread on the bottom of it. They had hundreds and hundreds of em and me and my nephew went to work down there cleaning them quills. Some of em call em quills and some people call em bobbins and that's what we went to work doing. We worked there that summer cleaning up the warehouse and products had been sent there from other places throwed away the bad ones and keep the good ones and

stuff like that you know. We worked that way during the summer but then I went back to school and went six months. Then I went to work full time, about eight hours a day. That's all they'd let you work till you got sixteen and I mostly doffed, sides, I think I got where I could run six sides. I was getting about twelve cents an hour then I believe and then when I got sixteen I went to work nine and three quarters an hour a day and I doffed and from doffing I went to what they called a fixer. I don't know what they call em now. They call em something else I think and I run that for about two years and then I went to

A: Now, was this on looms or on spinning frames?

W: Spinning frames, spinning frames.

A: Do you remember I guess from that low hourly wage when you first started at fourteen, you went up do you recall some of the other points like when you first started full time?

W: Well when I first started full time I was doffing and I doffed of course that was piece work. You were paid by the frame.

A: But about what were you?

W: I was making about twelve dollars a week and I got to be a fixer I got thirty two cents an hour plus a bonus if you worked two full weeks without being off a day you got a twenty per cent bonus.

A: That's nice.

W: And if you were off a day each week you got a ten per cent bonus and if you worked one full week, you got a fifteen per cent bonus.

A: Yeah.

W: Payday every two weeks you know. If you worked two weeks you got twenty percent, if you worked one full week you got fifteen percent, and if you were out a day each week, you got a ten percent bonus.

A: Now was this just for the fixers and machinist?

W: No, that was for everybody.

A: For everybody?

W: Everybody regardless of what you did. They had a rate and you got that rate. If you didn't work but one day you got ten percent above that rate. I think that was encouragement to try to make people work more regular you know.

A: I guess there had been a problem before that time with people just suddenly taking off.

W: They tell me there was. A woman they allowed her one day out of the month without losing a bonus. In other words if she worked two full weeks on this pay and then on the next two weeks pay she was off one day.

A: Like one of her kids got sick or something.

W: She got twenty per cent anyway. They allowed her one day out of the month monthly period you know but everybody else there was no difference. I mean as far as men were concerned they didn't have no extra day.

A: Now, you mentioned that period that you were working as an assistant foreman that you didn't particularly care for that. I think what over spinning or what area?

W: That was cloth room.

A: But then you said for a little while there you went back into the mill itself didn't you?

W: I went from the office to the cloth room and I worked in there with Mr. Gilmore for about six months. Then they wanted me to take what they call assistant superintendent at night and I worked on that about six months.

A: What was it the night work or was that what you didn't like about it?

W: I didn't like the night work and it was too demanding to me and then I went back to the cloth room and I stayed there and as long as I was there I stayed in the cloth room.

A: So you went back to the cloth room permanently about what year?

W: I couldn't tell you. I have no idea. Back then dates didn't mean too much to me.

A: Yeah. Yeah.

W: I wish though a lot of times there were a lot of things I had kept up with that you know really kept up with.

A: Yeah. Now you had mentioned at the homecoming at the building of the new church, what do you recall about your growing up at Packer Memorial about the church itself?

W: Well I just joined when I was nine years old and stayed in there with it.

A: Were most of the people who went to Packer mill folk or did they lot of village come in?

W: No, they weren't too many I guess it was fifty, fifty. Fifth Court they used to call it Deacon Hill. All of the deacons of the church but one lived up there on Fifth Court.

A: Yeah. Like railroad people and machinist and iron works?

W: Yeah, we had some railroad people mostly TCI people and it was two or three railroad people on there. Jackson, I think they were railroad people but the Heads. Head was a railroad man too. He worked at terminal station. Smallwood he was TCI. Mr. Smith was TCI and I can't think of those people's name that lived next door to the church, Austins. He was TCI man. Jackson, he was with Southern Railroad and I don't know it's kind of hard but we had pretty good church, pretty good Sunday School for a long time and finally fell down to where we'd have ten to fifteen in Sunday School and then it built back up. We'd have seventy five or eighty in Sunday School. Church was advertised for sale one time for road improvement.

A: Yeah.

W: We got behind on our payment and the city was going to sell it. Get it for seventy five dollars I believe it was for road improvement that hadn't been paid. Then the interest on it brought it up to a hundred and something dollars and then my brother and myself we started selling candy up in the spinning room to meet the payments. We made enough money selling candy and peanuts to meet the payments every month on that street improvement up there.

A: Yeah.

W: And after that why after we quit they called it dope wagon come through the mill you know with sandwiches, cold drinks, candies, hamburgers and every. They didn't have no period for lunch. We went to work at six o'clock and got off at two o'clock and just kept going.

A: So ya'll were the ones who really got that sort of thing started.

W: I think we was we had a preacher who came up there and was a Baker and he was a good un. He started selling after we got through he started selling stuff he'd bake over there in his bakery and he didn't stay there very long I can't remember his name. After he left, Mr. Mangham, why then he came up with this idea of this wagon. It had certain time for each floor you know. He'd go there and stand there and you'd go get what you wanted and take it back.

A: How did it get the name dope wagon? I'd be interested in it.

W: I don't have no idea. I couldn't tell you to save my neck. That's what they call It the dope wagon.

A: Yeah. Some of the people who worked on the mills over in the Carolinas say that you know back when Coca Cola first came out it actually had some cocaine in it you know.

W: I heard that.

A: And so it became known as a dope. So then later on the Carolina textile folks began calling it that.

W: I don't know how that name got there but there was a lil old stand on Thirty Ninth Street right next to a filling station there and lil old stand owner and this fellow made hamburgers and when he went from one floor to another and he'd go out there and get a fresh supply see so it would be warm.

A: Thirty Ninth and First?

W: Yeah.

A: Right there on First Avenue. Yeah I remember it. It was still standing when I first started visiting Aunt Mary. Now I know that there were several stores near the village there. When you were growing up where did your folks do most of their trading?

W: There was a store where the Banner Oil, you know where the Banner Oil sat.

A: Yeah.

W: Right straight across there was a store there. Well, my family, my wife and two kids, we traded there. J. T. Overstreet run it and then the company opened this store. To start with they opened it well before that we traded with W. S. Sims up on Fifth Avenue and Thirty Eighth Street or we traded with La Sousas on Fifth Avenue and Thirty Seventh Street but then the company opened this grocery store and people bought stock in it.

A: Sort of a cooperative.

W: What it was and I can't think of the man's name, oh what was his name? I played school, played ball with two of his boys and Gertrude well anyhow he opened it up and after four or five years why he quit and opened up a store up there on that lot that that construction company is on Thirty Ninth Street.

A: Yeah, yeah.

W: Well, he opened a store there and uh.

A: It wasn't Faroh's was it?

W: No. Faroh's was another one on down. Faroh's was there alright. They had a Hill Grocery Store in there where Happy Groceries is now that used to be a Hill Grocery Store and Mrs.

Mezererrni she owned it and when Hill's moved out Mezererrni put a dry goods store in there and further on down there, I can't think of his name, and anyway he opened up a store there and J. J. Overstreet bought out this store up here the company owned. Well we traded with them until his health got bad and he closed it up. Then we went to trading with George Faroh and traded with them for years and years and George sold out to his nephew and I don't know how long ago that's been.

A: Did people start trading with one grocer and faithfully stay with them or exactly what would cause you to start trading with on particular?

W: Well George Faroh, he was honest.

A: Let's slip.

End of Disc One

A: You were just fixing to tell about George Faroh.

W: He was honest had good stuff and he delivered and he'd sell on the credit. Hill Grocery Store when they closed up, up there you know, but didn't many people pay back in them days didn't nobody even had an automobile. They either had to go where they could carry it or somebody deliver it. Now way back yonder before these stores opened up there was a store down there where Yielding's is now, J. C. Perry and Company. Now they'd come around on Tuesday and he went to nearly everybody in the village and get an order on what you were going to need for the next two and weeks and he'd write this order up and then on Thursday they'd deliver. Everybody bought some. There weren't any stores around here back. I was about seven years old I guess. Then he'd come back on Saturday and collect what you owed him.

A: Yeah.

W: And all the kids he carried a stick of peppermint candy. But back in them days that's where most of them got their groceries. No then La Sousas Daddy opened that store. Hill Grocery Store was up there and George Faroh was up there. I don't remember too much about most of what we bought we bought from this company store or on the corner of Fifth Avenue was W. S. Sims Mercantile Company and he sold a little bit of everything. We did some trade with him.

A: Now on the store there in the village before Overstreet bought it, you said it was a cooperative store didn't you? Did your family but stock in it?

W: We did, Nora and myself but now I don't know where Will, I don't know whether he did or not. I don't know.

A: Were the prices a little cheaper than the other stores?

W: Well it was a little cheaper and I guess if it had panned out like it ought too, it would have been a whole lot better.

A: Did it allow people to buy on the credit?

W: I don't remember, I don't remember.

A: I was wonder you know if that might be the reason that they went to other stores.

W: I just don't remember. I just remember Roy Bustler working up there and Overstreet had two sons that worked in there. Back in them days you know they had shelves and a counter in front of the shelves.

A: Right.

W: Whatever you wanted why you told the man who's running the place and he'd get you a can of pork and beans or a can of salmon, lay it up and when you got it all piled up all what you wanted well he'd add it up. Now you take a push cart and go around.

A: And check the price at each point.

W: Yeah.

A: Well now once you got in the band, do you remember of ya'll big trips or exciting experiences?

W: Well I guess the most exciting experience I ever had was we played under the direction of John Phillip Sousa. We had taken the best of our band and the best of Boy's Industrial School and put them together and Sousa was playing an engagement in town and we went down. Mr. Comer got us front row seats and we played two pieces, Stars and Stripes Forever and I forget what the other one was, Lassie Trombone I believe. Anyhow I know he wrote one of em.

A: He wrote Stars and Stripes Forever. I know that.

W: Anyhow that was my biggest experience with the band.

A: Yeah.

W: But I thought that was something and I guess all the rest of them did too. Other than that I the only thing I know we was in a lot of parades and played a few concerts over there in Avondale Park. Out biggest time was Fourth of July when they all met down in Sylacauga and they had a big hall down there that all slept on the floor, all the men. I don't know what the women slept in but anyhow we all just had a big time down there.

A: Now, I don't know about while you were with the band, but I know later on they would have competition between the, you know individual competition between the people.

W: I think they did but I done left the band when that. I think I believe Mr. Jordan went to Fairfield School System or something and Mrs. Jordan took over and I believe what you talking about taken place during that time. I believe. I'm not sure about that.

A: Now working during the thirties I know that back in thirty four that there was a big strike at Avondale. Do you remember much about that?

W: Well, I know it was hard times.

A: Yeah.

W: Yeah, I remember a little bit about that. I know the best pie I ever eat. Somebody had give us some apples and my wife had made an apple pie and she taken it out of the stove and dropped it in the floor, coal stove you know, and she said looked at it and said what in the world are we going to do. I said we going to scoop it up and eat it. The best pie of course we were real careful not to get down on the floor but that was the best pie I ever ate in my life.

A: Yeah.

W: Mr. Comer was mighty good to those people even with that cause after they did go back to work why he dropped their rent that they owed em. He cut it out and the light bill he dropped it and people that wasn't participating in the strike what I mean you know, he'd go around ever once and a while and see if they needed anything. Anything he could help get them with and they opened up a welfare.

A: Yeah. The Esau House?

W: Over there in south Avondale. He'd go over there and get I don't know I think this dried beans and butter and some cuts of beef stuff like that you know. Course we had two or three that lived out in the country bring us some beef from the farm and we went out to my brother's house out in Springville and stayed about four weeks with him while they were on strike. We didn't do too bad. I mean we didn't have a whole lot that we had had before but we got along better without it than we did before.

A: Yeah.

W: But they a lot of people that were sorry they got into it. A lot of people a good many people lost their job after it was over with that wish they hadn't. I don't know it's just. They never did know what they're striking for more or less to be recognized I guess but that just. We had a sister that lived in Ensley. Her husband worked for TCI too and she'd bring us up a little something every once in a while you know.

A: Yeah.

W: We'd just help one another.

A: And got through it.

W: Got through it.

A: Yeah. Now you were became overseer of the cloth room?

W: Yeah.

A: And went on through the thirties doing that. What finally led you in '41 to go with Ingles? I know it must a have been a really rough decision for you.

W: Well, I rather this really wouldn't be on tape.

A: OK.

TAPE CUTS OFF

W: I wasn't qualified to run it. I mean I really wasn't. If it had been a spinning room or a card room I'd a probably did better and it just got rough. If I cut out a piece of cloth I shouldn't have. If I didn't cut out, I should have and stuff like that you know and I told Mr. Mangham down there one day I said Mr. Mangham we don't make cloth in the cloth room. All we do is to cut out the bad places. Yeah, but you're cutting out to damn many of them.

A: Yeah.

W: Then if we sent one off and it come back, we caught hell for that see.

A: Yeah.

W: And Roy Bursler his wife worked for me down there in the cloth room he was superintendent over at Ingles and he had been trying to get me to come over there for a couple of months and the day I quit why he come up there and said you go to work for me and I said Roy I haven't had a vacation in so many years, I think I'll be off for several weeks. He said that's alright and I didn't have a car. He said that would be alright when you get ready and I told him I was ready and he come got me on Friday, March 14 and I had worked a little while over at American, Virginia Bridge they called it then in between times and run a milling machine over there when I was about sixteen years old worked over there for a while and he put me on a milling machine over there and I'm glad. I think the good Lord had something to do with it.

A: Yeah, yeah.

W: It turned out to be a real good job and I enjoyed it and it worked me up to when I did retire I had enough experience and was well thought of enough that Alabama Power hired me as a consultant for twelve dollars an hour and all my expenses. That was pretty good money five years ago.

A: Yeah. Now exactly what had you done at Ingles? I mean what was your final position there?

W: I was shipping foreman on second shift. I had worked as a lay out man and I had filled in as assistant superintendent and I had been on the receiving yard done that for a couple of years. In charge of incoming and outgoing materials you know and had to keep up with the cars that were placed and when they were full and how much demerge we owed and how much credits we got and stuff like that you know.

A: Now what were the skills that you had that Alabama Power?

W: Well I knew welding and I knew steel. You'd be surprised how much steel you can get into a place that's laminated and I knew that and I knew beams real well and I know how to lay out and I knew how to fit it and I was recommended by a man I didn't think even knew me. He was head man at Steel Construction Company which Ingles owned and when the man that was on the job quit it, he recommended me and I took the job. Worked at it four years before I had my eyes operated on and I had to quit.

A: Now, that was like mainly what power plant construction or what?

W: Well, that was all the steel that went into their construction work. They were building three plants, four plants down here at west Jefferson and I got in the ground floor of that and every company that supplied steel for any of their jobs I was supposed to take a quick look at it and see how they were doing it and me and my wife enjoyed that and had a big time.

A: Yeah.

W: We did a lot of traveling and it didn't cost us nothing. Made money out of it and got twelve dollars an hour on top of it.

A: Yeah, plus what you were getting in retirement from Ingles.

W: Yeah, I was getting that. I didn't get my Social Security though.

A: Yeah, you were too young for that.

W: No, I wasn't too young I was making too much.

A: Yeah, back then you couldn't get it. That's changed somewhat.

W: See, I was sixty five when I left Ingles. I was off three months and went to work for Red Fulton at Pittsburg Testing Laboratories. That didn't pay nothing, but you didn't do nothing so you couldn't expect nothing. But then about five months Alabama Power called me and said I had been recommended to em. Mr. I can't think of his name now anyhow he wanted to know if I would be interested in it and I told him, Morris King, and I told him I think so could be I knew the man who had the job before and I knew what he was getting and I knew what all he went to. So he set up the appointment for me to meet three other men over there about four or five days after that and we talked I guess about an hour. After they got their heads together and said well, will you take the job and I said yeah, I'll take it. Said well would ten dollars an hour be sufficient. I said well I guess it will. He said well now about driving, do mind going on a long distance I said no, how do you want me to go? He said anyway you want to. You can drive your car, go by plane, bus anyway you want to go. Said, that's up to you. Well I took that for two years at ten dollars an hour plus expenses plus fifteen cents a mile for the car. Then they gave me a two dollar raise in two years after I'd been there two years.

A: Yeah. That is nice.

W: And when I turned in my resignation on account of my eyes they told me said well do what you can and when you get ready to come back, let us know.

A: Yeah.

W: But, instead of my eyes getting better, they've gotten worse.

A: Yeah. What was is, cataracts?

W: Cataracts.

A: That's always rough.

W: This one this eye here when they operated on it they cut if off they scratched the pupil of my eye and I've been to five different doctors since the man operated on me and they told me the same thing. There was no uh.

A: At the point that Winfrey had me cut off the tape, what he stated during that time was that why he actually was that Carl Mangham, the superintendent of the mill, was just riding him too much and then of course the tape was turned back on and he basically said that at that point anyway. After we had ended the interview we got to talking about things like how his son and daughter had done. His daughter had married a Navy career man who had retired as a warrant officer after twenty eight years in the Navy and they now have a small farm out near Springville on what is known as Pine Mountain. His son is now the manager and advertising manager of the Birmingham Magazine which is a local primarily public relations and advertising type city

booster journal. Also, after the end of the interview, he was telling another antidote about the fact that Donald Comer also used to take the boys possum hunting. He would get a man who was capable of helping with the boys and he would join them on possum hunts quite often.